

Efforts are being made by us to look for this species in Kachchh, as part of a project on Conservation of the Rare and Endangered Biodiversity of Kachchh, Gujarat, funded by the Gujarat Ecology Commission.

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## 14. OCCURRENCE OF THE WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN *CHLIDONIAS LEUCOPTERUS* IN KERALA

During our field trips in the Enamavu, Kole wetlands of Thrissur, Kerala, between September 12-15, 1998, Paul, P.M.K., C.K. Sujithkumar and I came across a few unfamiliar tern species feeding over the freshly drained paddy fields along with whiskered terns *Chlidonias hybrida*. Some of these were in partial breeding or post-breeding plumage, so that we could easily identify them as the white-winged black tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*.

On the evening of September 12, we saw at least three individuals (one adult and two juveniles) of this species feeding amongst a group of the whiskered terns. During flight, the black underwing coverts were the most noticeable feature of the adult bird. Mantle and back, black or blackish. Upper wing mostly smoky grey. Upper primaries deep ashy grey. A trace of whitish panel on upperwing coverts.

Forehead white. Hind crown and ear-coverts (behind eyes) black. A white collar on hind neck. Underparts wholly white. Under primaries grey. Rump and tail totally pure white. But the middle tail feathers were light grey. The shallow tail fork was sometimes visible (sometimes appeared nearly square). Bill black, legs and feet red. The red legs were occasionally seen as they trailed in feeding flight.

The mantle and back of the juveniles were dark brown; upper wing smoky grey; an indistinct paler panel on upperwing coverts. Underwing mostly whitish; no black on underwing coverts. The remaining features were similar to the adult.

The following afternoon, we observed the same number of birds feeding in the same area. But the underparts of the adult bird were quite different, being black mottled with white.

On the last day at 1430 hrs, we could see two adults hawking their prey over the grassy paddy fields, somewhat like swallows. One of these had an entirely black head and body, except for the white forehead and little white blotches on the underparts.

There is no earlier published record of the white-winged black tern in Kerala.

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# 15. SIGHTINGS OF WHITECHEEKED TERN *STERNA REPRESSA*, WHITEWINGED BLACK TERN *CHLIDONIAS LEUCOPTERUS* AND SAUNDERS'S LITTLE TERN *STERNA SAUNDERSI* AT PORBANDER COAST, GUJARAT

Porbander (21° 37' N, 69° 49' E), a small coastal town on the west coast of Gujarat, is an important area for birds. A wide intertidal zone, a muddy creek with mangroves encircling the town, extensive salt pans on the outskirts, fishing industry and a small (3.1 ha) bird sanctuary on the sewage dump are all bird habitats. Various tern species observed at Porbander during a few visits in 1997 are recorded here.

On June 17, 1997 we saw several terns slightly larger than the whiskered tern *Chlidonias hybrida* flying above the salt pans. An osprey *Pandion haliaetus* caught one of them and landed on a stone about 60 m from us. The other terns mobbed the osprey and landed nearby. Closer examination revealed that all the 35 birds were whitecheeked tern *Sterna repressa* in non-breeding plumage. A flock of 450 other terns was also seen pursuing each other with chirping calls.

The whitecheeked tern is known to breed on Vengurla Rocks off Malvan on the west coast, c. 16° N, 73° 30' E (Ali and Ripley 1983). It is common on the Makran and Sindh coasts of Pakistan, particularly from March to May, but there is no evidence of its breeding (Ali and Ripley 1983). However, a specimen was collected on June 12, 1973, at Bombay harbour (Menon 1974). This species has never been reported from Gujarat coast and hence, this is the first record.

Though it was June 17, we also recorded the gullbilled tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (1), Caspian tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (2), whiskered tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (8) and Saunders's little tern *Sterna saundersi* (2).

On April 27, we saw 3 whitewinged black tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* repeatedly flying over the waters of the bird sanctuary. Two birds had complete breeding plumage, whereas the third one still had some white patches on the black belly. These three terns were foraging along with 16 whiskered terns *Chlidonias hybrida*. The whitewinged black tern is a rare visitor to Assam, West Bengal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (Ali and Ripley 1983). There have been three records of this species from Gujarat: twice from Jasdan (Shivraj Kumar 1955) and once from Jamnagar (Mundkur 1987). Sighting of three birds from the Porbander coast indicates that the species occurs over a greater area of Gujarat state and is less vagrant than recorded (Ali and Ripley 1983). Sangha (1998) reported the species from Rajasthan, which further supports this view.

We also saw two flying Saunders's little tern *Sterna saundersi* from a very short distance on April 27 and June 17. This tern is known to breed around Karachi (Pakistan), Kachchh, Okhamandal (India) and in Sri Lanka (Ali and Ripley 1983). The only record of its occurrence in Gujarat is from Mithapur (Dharmakumarsinhji 1972). On Mundra coast,